

MARCH 4, 1976

RHODESIA AT THE CROSSROADS

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE SITUATION IN RHODESIA.

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER IAN SMITH AND HIS REGIME BROKE AWAY FROM BRITAIN RATHER THAN TOLERATE REPRESENTATIVE MAJORITY RULE HE IS NOW ALMOST COMPLETELY ISOLATED, FACING THE PROSPECT OF BOTH WAR AND ECONOMIC RUIN. THE QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER---AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR---HE WILL INSIST ON KEEPING TO A COURSE WHICH MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER SUICIDAL.

(OPT.) THE TROUBLE, OF COURSE, IS THAT MR. SMITH AND HIS SUPPORTERS SEE ANY CHANGE FROM THAT COURSE AS SUICIDAL. BLACK MAJORITY RULE, IN THEIR VIEW, WOULD MEAN AN END TO THEIR WAY OF LIFE AS A PRIVILEGED RULING CLASS. IN THIS, THEY ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY RIGHT; RHODESIA WOULD NOT BE THE SAME, AND THE TRANSITION WOULD BE AN UNCOMFORTABLE ONE. UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE THE LEAP FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE ACCOUNTS FOR THE PRESENT AGONIZING HESITANCY IN SALISBURY. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS A LEAP THAT MUST BE MADE. (END OPT.)

DEVELOPMENTS IN RECENT DAYS HAVE INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON THE SMITH REGIME TO FACE UP TO THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION. ON WEDNESDAY PRESIDENT SAMORA MACHEL OF MOZAMBIQUE CLOSED THE BORDER WITH RHODESIA---SHUTTING OFF VALUABLE LINKS TO THE SEA---AND DECLARED THAT HIS COUNTRY WAS GOING ON A WAR FOOTING, WHICH IS BEING INTERPRETED AS FORESHADOWING A SERIOUS ESCALATION OF GUERRILLA WARFARE. IN BRITAIN, PRESIDENT MACHEL'S DECLARATION WAS OFFICIALLY WELCOMED, WITH THE STATEMENT THAT IT EMPHASIZED THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE. EARLIER IN THE WEEK, AGOSTINHO NETO, LEADER

OF THE POPULAR MOVEMENT IN ANGOLA, HAD SAID THAT HE WOULD AID GUERRILLAS IN BOTH RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA. THIS, INCIDENTALLY, RAISES THE POSSIBILITY THAT CUBAN TROOPS MIGHT BE USED---A POSSIBILITY WHICH SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER SAID THURSDAY WOULD REPRESENT "THE GRAVEST PROBLEM." HE CALLED ON THE CUBANS TO ACT "WITH GREAT CIRCUMSPECTION." BUT HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATES FAVORS A TRANSITION TO BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA. AND HE WARNED THE SALISBURY REGIME THAT ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH MODERATE BLACK LEADERS ARE "PERHAPS THE LAST OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACEFUL REVOLUTION."

THE NEGOTIATIONS OF WHICH SECRETARY KISSINGER SPOKE BEGAN LAST DECEMBER, BETWEEN MR. SMITH AND JOSHUA NKOMO, HEAD OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL. (OPT.) THEY APPEARED TO BE GOING NOWHERE. HOWEVER, AFTER THE LATEST ROUND OF TALKS---LAST MONDAY---MR. NKOMO SPOKE OF NEW AND INTERESTING GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS, AND A MEMBER OF HIS PARTY SAID THAT THE PROPOSALS REPRESENTED "A NEAR-BREAKTHROUGH." THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER WORD ON THE NATURE OF THE PROPOSALS---BUT HOPE HAS BEEN EXPRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL AT LAST DISPLAY THE REQUIRED FLEXIBILITY TO MAKE SOME REAL CONCESSIONS AND BREAK THE NEGOTIATING DEADLOCK. (END OPT.)

THE KEY MAN, OF COURSE, IS IAN SMITH. "MR. SMITH IS HIS OWN MAN, AND HE WILL GO HIS OWN WAY---BUT WHETHER TO HEAVEN OR PERDITION I AM STILL NOT QUITE SURE." WITH THESE WORDS BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY JAMES CALLAGHAN SUMMED UP THE DECISION WHICH NOW FACES THE RHODESIAN LEADER. BUT THE PERDITION TO WHICH HE REFERRED WOULD NOT BE MR. SMITH'S ALONE. IT WOULD BE THE PROSPECT OF A RACIAL WAR IN SOUTHERN AFRICA FROM WHICH BOTH WHITES AND BLACKS

WOULD SUFFER, WHICH WOULD OPEN THE WAY FOR OUTSIDE INTERVENTION, AND WHICH WOULD RESULT IN A LEGACY OF BITTERNESS FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. SANITY ALONE WOULD SEEM TO DICTATE A DECISION AIMED AT AVOIDING SUCH A PROSPECT---A DECISION IN FAVOR OF IMMEDIATE STEPS LEADING TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AND MAJORITY CONTROL. MR. SMITH HIMSELF HAS ADMITTED THAT HE PERCEIVES "A CHANGED SITUATION." IT IS UP TO HIM TO ACT---WITHOUT DELAY---ON THE STRENGTH OF THAT PERCEPTION.

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